

FACT SHEET

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YOUR FOOD BUDGET

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How much should you spend for food? There's no dollars-and-cents answer, but spend enough to give your family nutritious, enjoyable meals.

Income and Money for Food

People with low incomes generally need to spend a greater portion of the family dollar for food to maintain nutritionally adequate diets. A family with a low income may have to spend from half to two-thirds of their total income for a minimum-cost, adequate diet.

A simple way to plan adequate diets at different cost levels is to properly divide the amount of money spent among the food groups. Each food group is valuable for certain nutrients.

Food Dollar

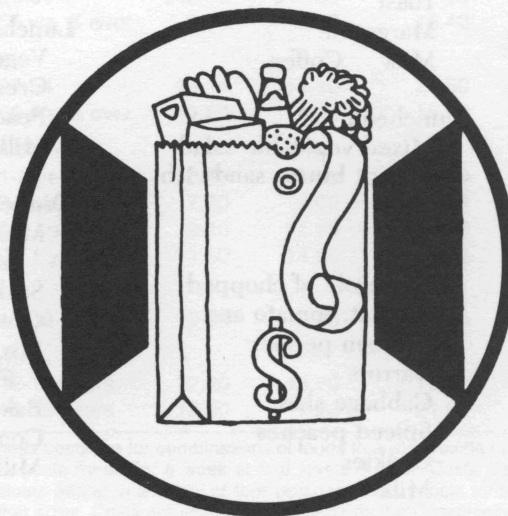
The U.S. Department of Agriculture quarterly survey on the spending of the food dollar for December 1978 indicated the following expenditures at moderate cost levels.

- 33.0 percent for meat, poultry and fish
- 1.5 percent for eggs
- 1.4 for dry beans, peas and nuts
- 14.4 percent for milk, cheese and ice cream
- 19.3 percent for vegetables and fruits
- 15.4 percent for bread and other grain products and
- 15.0 percent for fats, sweets, beverages and other foods

The spending pattern did not vary much at different income levels. The expenditure for the meat group was by far the highest, with fruits and vegetables next.

The thrifty and low income group spends proportionally less of the food dollar for the meat group than the moderate and liberal income groups. This explains the greater expenditure of the thrifty and low income dollar for meat substitutes such as legumes.

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The homemaker can plan menus with this distribution of food money in mind. Of every \$10 spent for food by a moderate income family of four, about \$3.30 should go for meat, poultry and fish; \$0.15 for eggs; \$0.14 for dry beans, peas and nuts; \$1.93 for fruit and vegetables; \$1.50 for fats, sweets and other foods; \$1.54 for bread and other grain products and \$1.44 for dairy products. The homemaker must choose foods in each group that are priced within the family budget.

Menus and Cost Levels

Plan daily allowances of milk (3 to 4 cups for each child and 2 cups for each adult) and distribute bread and cereals among the day's meals. Each person should get at least one daily serving of the following foods: citrus fruits or tomato, green or yellow vegetable, some other fruit and/or other vegetable. One potato serving should be eaten almost every day and meat or legumes should be served twice daily.

If you do not adjust to spending about the recommended amount for each food group without calculations, you may check at the end of the week or month on each food group's total costs.

Review the three menus at different cost levels to see the wide price range possible within the same food group. Note the range from the relatively inexpensive orange juice to the relatively expensive cantaloupe, from carrots to broccoli and from small amounts of meats in casseroles to expensive sirloin.

Serving sizes are not given on menus, but servings are usually larger in the low-cost meals with fewer dishes.

Menus At Three Cost Levels	LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
	Breakfast Fortified canned fruit juice Oatmeal Milk and sugar Toast Margarine Milk Coffee	Breakfast Frozen orange juice Hot cakes with syrup Milk Coffee	Breakfast ½ cantaloupe Puffed rice with cream Scrambled eggs and bacon Butter Milk Coffee
	Luncheon Mixed vegetable salad Peanut butter sandwich Milk	Luncheon Vegetable soup Creamed eggs on biscuits Peaches Milk	Luncheon Cream of tomato soup Grapefruit-avocado salad, poppy seed dressing Cheese toast Cream puffs Milk Tea
	Dinner Casserole of chopped meat, tomato and green pepper Carrots Cabbage slaw Spiced peaches Cookies Milk	Dinner Meat loaf with tomato sauce Scalloped potatoes Green beans Mixed green salad with French dressing Baked custard Cookies Milk Coffee	Dinner Celery-carrot sticks Broiled sirloin Baked potato Broccoli Curly lettuce salad with Roquefort dressing Strawberry shortcake Milk Coffee

Foods considered essential to an adequate diet are well represented at each cost level. Every diet will be adequate if each family member eats proper amounts of milk, meat and other protein foods, citrus fruit and green and yellow vegetables.

Family Food Plans

The total quantity of different food groups recommended for a weekly diet have been developed for diets at thrift, low, moderate and liberal-cost levels. According to this plan, the homemaker makes a grocery list by adding the quantities in each food group for each person per week and distributing these foods throughout the week's menus.

Weekly food bills for a family of four on the thrifty

food plan average \$36.90 to \$44.40 depending on the ages of the children. Comparable costs are \$47.50 to \$57.30 on the low-cost plan, \$59.30 to \$71.80 for the moderate-cost plan, and \$71.00 to \$86.10 for the liberal plan.

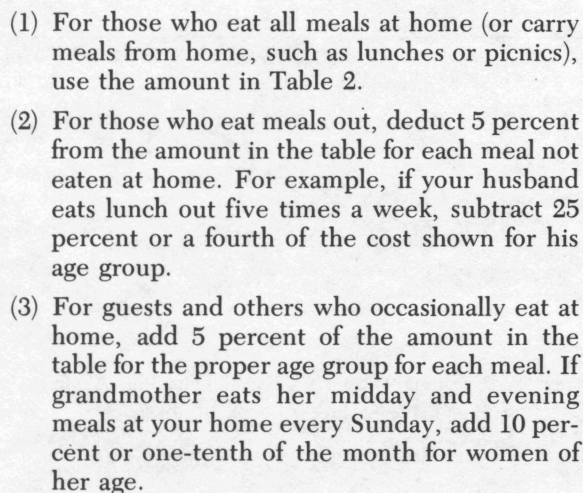
The following steps tell you how to figure the cost of food in these plans for your family. Compare the USDA estimates with the amount you now spend for food to help evaluate your food spending.

Step One: Select the plan from Table 1 — thrifty, low cost, moderate cost or liberal cost — that best suits your family situation. The plan you select depends largely on your family size and income, but the importance you give food in relation to other family

Table 1. The Food Plan for the Family

Income (Before Taxes)	1-person family	2-person family	3-person family	4-person family	5-person family	6-person family
\$2,500 to \$5,000	T ¹ or LC	T ¹ or LC	T ¹	T ¹	T ¹	T ¹
\$5,000 to \$10,000	MC	LC	T ¹ or LC	T ¹	T ¹	T ¹
\$10,000 to \$15,000	L	MC	LC or MC	LC	T or LC	T ¹
\$15,000 to \$20,000	L	L	MC	LC or MC	LC	T or LC
\$20,000 to \$30,000	L	L	MC or L		MC or L	LC
\$30,000 to \$40,000	L	L	L	MC or L	MC or L	MC
\$40,000 or more	L	L	L	L	L	MC or L
T Thrifty LC Low-Cost MC Moderate-Cost L Liberal						

¹Many families of this size and income are eligible for assistance through the Food Stamp Program. For further information, contact your welfare department.

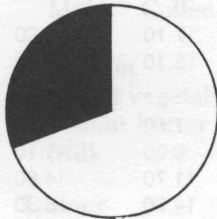


How do the two totals compare? If you spend about the same amount weekly for food as the cost of foods in the Table 1 plan, you will know your spend-

Table 3. Percentage of income available for food.

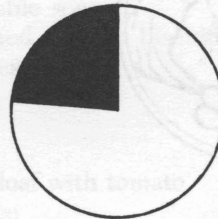
Budgets of 4-person Families at Three Levels of Living,
Urban United States, Autumn 1977

	Lower budget	Intermediate budget	Higher budget
Total budget	\$10,481	\$17,106	\$25,202
Food	3,190	4,098	5,159



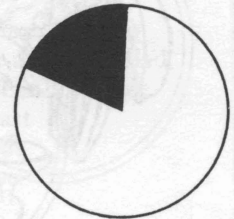
Low income level

30% for food



Moderate income level

24% for food



High income level

20% for food

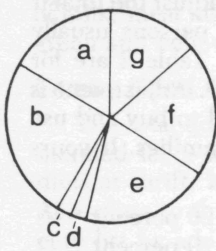
Reference: News, United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Washington, D.C. 20212, April 26, 1978.

ing is in line for families of similar size and income and the amount is sufficient for nutritious meals.

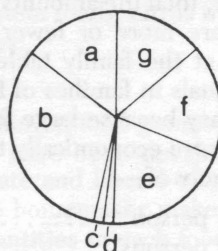
If you spend considerably more, you probably could use some help in holding food costs down. If you spend a great deal less, you may not be providing the food assortment your family needs.

USDA food plans are only suggested spending guides. The amount you spend may be more or less depending on

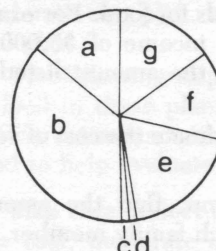
- the foods you select.
- where you live.
- how much food you prepare yourself.
- whether you raise some of your own food.
- how carefully you plan and buy.
- the importance you place on food in relation to other family needs.



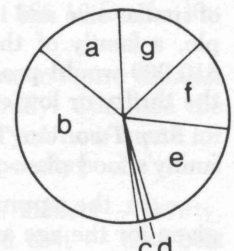
Thrifty Plan



Low Cost Plan



Moderate Plan



Liberal Plan

	Thrifty Plan	Low Cost Plan	Moderate Plan	Liberal Plan
	pct.	pct.	pct.	pct.
a. Milk, cheese, ice cream	16.0	14.5	14.4	14.0
b. Meat, poultry, fish	24.3	30.1	33.0	35.4
c. Eggs	2.3	1.8	1.5	1.3
d. Dry beans, peas, nuts	2.5	1.7	1.4	1.4
e. Vegetables, fruits	19.5	19.2	19.3	19.3
f. Bread, other grain products	21.4	17.7	15.4	14.2
g. Fats, sweets, beverages and other foods	14.0	15.0	15.0	14.4

References

- Bogert, L. J., Briggs, G. M., Calloway, D. H., *Nutrition and Physical Fitness*, W. B. Saunders Company, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1966.
 Sherwood, M., *Worksheet*, Washington, D.C., U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, December 1978.
Your Money's Worth in Foods, Home and Garden Bulletin No. 183, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

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